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Is the Chicken Kosher?



Rav Yitzchok Elchanan Spector

The Rav of a certain town was once asked to rule on the Kashrus of a chicken, which was found to have a rare defect. The Rav, a Talmid Chacham, inspected the chicken carefully and consulted a number of Sefarim. In the end, he ruled that the chicken was Kosher.

Several Talmidei Chachamim living in the town heard about this interesting question that had come before the Rav. They discussed the situation among themselves and discovered that according to most Poskim, the chicken should have been declared not Kosher. Soon, the town was in an uproar.

Many people felt that the Rav should be dismissed due to his mistake in his ruling. Others defended him, arguing that someone can make a mistake, especially in such a rare situation like this one, and it was not a sufficient reason to take such a drastic step and fire him.

Finally, it was decided to bring the matter to Rav Yitzchok Elchanan Spector, zt"l, of Kovno, who was one of the greatest Poskim of the generation. A messenger set out for Kovno with the chicken in question. He showed it to Rav Yitzchok Elchanan and explained the situation.

Rav Yitzchok Elchanan examined the chicken and found it to be Treif. Still, he felt it was unfair to dismiss the Rav from his position for having made the error. Even more, he was afraid that even if the Rav was permitted to remain in his job, his stature would surely be diminished because of what had happened. Rav Yitzchok Elchanan thought about the situation until he found a way to make sure that the Rav's honor would not be compromised.

The Two Conflicting Telegrams

He sent a telegram message to the town, and said that the chicken was Kosher. A short while later, he sent another telegram which said, "Please ignore the previous message. I made a mistake, and the chicken is not Kosher."

When the townspeople read the telegrams, there was no question any more that the Rav should remain in his position. After all, if the great Poseik, Rav Yitzchok Elchanan Spector could make a mistake, surely it was reasonable that their own Rav, who was younger and less experienced, could make a mistake as well!

Reprinted from the Parshas Acharei Mos – Kedoshim 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

I Work in the Yeshiva



Rav Gershon Edelstein

This story took place many years ago, on the first day of the new zeman at Ponovezh Yeshivah. A new student was walking toward the yeshivah, carrying some heavy luggage. He stood and looked around in all directions. Where was the yeshivah building? Where was the dorm?

Then he saw a man walking. He must live around here, the bachur thought. He went to the man and asked, “Where is the yeshivah?” The answer was quick to come. “I am also walking to the yeshivah. Come with me. I work in the yeshivah. Maybe I can take one of your suitcases to make it easier for you?”

The boy was happy to agree. The two of them continued walking until they reached the yeshivah, each of them carrying one heavy bag. Imagine that bachur’s shock the next day, when he discovered that the man who “worked in the yeshivah,” and who had carried his heavy suitcase, was none other than the rosh yeshivah, Rav Gershon Edelstein himself...

Reprinted from the Parshas Bechukosai 5782 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book - Gedolim in Our Times – Stories About Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt”l and Rav Gershon Edelstein shlit”a adapted by Libby Lazewnik.

The Better Book and the Master of Forgiveness

Rav Eliyahu Chaim Meisel, zt”l, was the Rav of Lodz and one of the Gedolei HaDor. In addition to his greatness in Torah, he was also great in performing acts of Chesed, as he spent much effort trying to ease the troubles of those who were less fortunate.

It was common at the time that poor Jewish children were taken away and forced to join the Russian army, but this never happened while Rav Eliyahu Chaim was the Rav. Once, Rav Meisel met with Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, zt”l, and Rav Meisel praised the Sefer Achiezer which Rav Chaim Ozer had recently published.

Rav Chaim Ozer asked Rav Meisel, “When will we see a Sefer (book) from you?”

Rav Meisel responded by emptying his pockets of little folded pieces of paper. They were promissory notes from loans he had signed to enable him to help widows and orphans. He piled them together and held them up and said, “This is my Sefer. I am so busy with matters of this nature that I don’t have the time to complete a Sefer.”

With tears in his eyes, Rav Chaim Ozer responded, “My Sefer doesn’t even come close to your Sefer!”



Rav Eliyahu Chaim Meisel and Rav Chaim Kanievski of blessed memories

Rav Chaim's Gemach

Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, ran a Gemach (interest free loan fund) in his home for many years. In recent years, Rav Chaim asked his son to take over running it. As Rav Chaim handed over all the documents and information, Rav Chaim shared an important piece of information with his son.

He said, "The Arizal tells us that if someone lends another person money and the money is not paid back, then both of them, the borrower and the lender, are forced to return to this world so that the borrower can repay his loan. The reason the lender has to return," explained Rav Chaim, "is because he is also responsible since he did not forgive the debt."

Rav Chaim handed his son a list of names and said, "These names are the people who borrowed money from the Gemach and have never repaid the loan. They haven't paid until now, and chances are that it may never be repaid. I would like to forgive their debts, but this money belongs to Tzedakah, and I'm not able to do that.

"Therefore, I am giving you money from my own savings," and he handed him a nice amount of money. He told him, "Please take this money and pay off their debts to the Gemach, so that neither I, nor they, have to return to this world to deal with this matter again in the future!"

Reprinted from the Parshas Acharei Mos-Kedoshim 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

Making Decisions

By Rabbi Joey Haber



Photo of one of the Beis Medrashim in Beis Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, NJ.

In the 19th century, there was an illustrious yeshiva in Lithuania that was known as the “mother” of all yeshivot. The Volozhin Yeshiva produced the greatest Torah minds of Eastern Europe, and many outstanding yeshivot were outgrowths of this yeshiva. It was a citadel of Torah learning, the crown jewel of advanced Torah scholarship at that time.

In 1892, the decision was made to close the yeshiva. The Russian government wanted to exert its control over the yeshiva, and sought to impose changes to the curriculum. There was a great deal of controversy surrounding the question of what the yeshiva should do, and ultimately, the decision was made to shut its doors.

Fast forward 130 years later. There is a town in New Jersey with a large yeshiva – the largest yeshiva outside Israel [Beis Medrash Govoha] – that was established following the model of Volozhin. This town now has dozens upon dozens of yeshivot, and thousands of yeshiva and kollel students. This town, of course, is Lakewood. Interestingly enough, there is a sign in Lakewood that reads, “Established 1892.”

The Rabbis who decided to close the Volozhin Yeshiva [in 1892] made the best decision they could, and left the rest in Hashem's hands. Sure enough, He was already planting the seeds for the rebirth of the Volozhin style of learning across the ocean, in New Jersey.

Making decisions can be frightening, but it becomes less difficult when we approach our decisions with emunah, recognizing that ultimately, the outcome depends on Hashem, who always does what is best for us.

Reprinted from the Parshat Aharei Mot-Kedoshim 5783 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

A Yom Kippur War Lesson

By Rabbi Mordechai Levin



Baruch Adiri is an Israeli farmer who observes Shemittah. He was not always religious as he was raised in a secular environment. However, during the Yom Kippur War, he learned firsthand that without Hashem, one can do nothing.

Baruch was in one of four half-tracks that were left to defend the Syrian border; all the tanks were sent to the south to fight Egypt. Suddenly, about 1,200 Syrian tanks crossed the border.

When the Israeli half-tracks went up a hill, they saw 80 of those tanks facing them less than 1,000 feet away. One direct shot from the tanks and they would be dead, and there was nothing behind them all the way to Tel Aviv.

Against all human logic, Hashem put into the mind of the Syrian tank commander not to shoot, but to turn back to Syria instead. The tank commander was later court-martialed for turning back. He explained that when he came to the north of Israel and saw only four half-tracks, he was sure it was a trap.

In the moment of that tense encounter, Baruch realized that there is a Greater Power that controls the world, and began his journey to become a Shomer Torah and Mitzvos.

Reprinted from the Parshas Acharei Mos-Kedoshim 5783 email of Torah Sweets. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book "On the Shoulders of Giants," by Shmuel Bloom) Photo of Yom Kippur war tank by Nathan Fendrich and donated with other Yom Kippur war photos to the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem.

The Bouncing Check

By Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein, zt"l



A man approached me some time ago asking for *tzedakah*. He had been a very well-to-do man, but unfortunately lost it all after a plunge in the stock and real estate markets, and now, he was in dire need of being supported himself. He had no money to pay his mortgage, let alone put sufficient food on the table for his family.

But before he went into his pitch, he had something to say. “Rabbi, I want to tell you something incredible that happened to me the other day.” “Alright,” I said, “I’m all ears.”

“Every year before Purim, there is a man who comes to me asking for money. He has a very large family, and sadly, his house burned down, he is out of a job, and his wife and two of his children are sick. Knowing this, every year over the course of a decade, I’ve given him \$500 to help carry him through the holidays of Purim and Pesach.

Didn’t Have the Heart to Turn Him Away

“Last week, he came to me, asking his annual request. But I didn’t have what to give him. I don’t even have what to give my own family. As he sat down, I knew I didn’t have the heart to turn him away and not give him anything. I began taking out my checkbook, knowing that my checking account had absolutely no money in it. But I still wrote out a check for \$100 and handed it to him. I just couldn’t say no.

The man graciously took the check, but when he looked at it and noticed the significant decrease in amount given, grew silent. ‘I wish I could give you more,’ I said, ‘but I’m just not able to do so right now.’ Nonetheless, he thanked me and left. “Minutes later, it got me to. ‘I’m crazy,’ I told myself. ‘Where am I going to get \$100 from? I can’t afford food and clothing for my own family! I just wrote a check that’s going to bounce.’ I made up my mind that I’d go the following day to the bank and ask the manager if the bank could cover the check for just a short while, while I scramble the money together.

“But, the next day, I got tied up and by the time I was ready to go to the bank, it had already closed. And then I forgot about it. Totally. Days went by and it completely slipped my mind that I had ever written this man a check altogether.

Hoping that the Man Hadn’t Cashed the Check

“Three days later, I remembered. Growing anxious, I ran over to the bank, hoping that the man hadn’t cashed the check already. But the chances of that were slim, as he certainly needed the money right away and wouldn’t wait any longer than the next available opportunity.

“I slipped my credit card into the ATM machine and there, to my surprise, it displayed on the screen: \$214. ‘That’s odd,’ I thought to myself. ‘How do I have any money in my account? Where did this come from?’ Looking through the details of the account, the original source of this deposit came up as ‘Miscellaneous’ for \$314, after which the \$100 check hit, leaving me with the current balance of \$214. That explained the math, but I still had no idea where the \$314 originated from. What was this ‘miscellaneous deposit’?

“I felt as if it was a miracle. Here I was, writing a check with no money in my account, and it came through. Hashem covered it. I immediately headed to the bank

manager and asked if she could tell me who deposited this \$314 in my account. “Let me look it up,” she said.

\$314 Payout from the Life Insurance Policy

“After a few clicks and taps on the keyboard, she swiveled her screen around toward me and said, ‘Sir, you have a life insurance policy and you earn an annual rate, anywhere in the range of 314 to 390 dollars. You’ve been getting this for years.’ The \$314 for the life insurance had hit my account just a few days before I wrote the check, but I had no idea. I thought I was giving away money that I didn’t have, when all the while I really did have it, plus more.

“It never occurred to me that I’d be getting this money,” he finished telling me, “because I never noticed it. I used to have millions, as you know, and this was just a drop in the bucket. But now it meant so much. And in addition, I now had another 200 dollars with which I could provide my family with our Purim and Pesach needs. Hashem took care of it all.”

Now, you’re likely wondering, what does this story mean? Should I now start writing checks out of accounts where I don’t have money and expect G-d to take care of it? The answer is no. If you do, your check will bounce from here to Heaven. And the reason not to is because you’d likely be doing it because you read this story and feel inspired to give generously, under such dire circumstances, like this man did.

Genuinely Felt for the Other Man and His Family

But this man didn’t have a story beforehand. He didn’t do it because he wanted to look good. He didn’t know this story would be told about him. He did it because he genuinely felt for this other man and his family and wanted to help.

There is power in your *emunah* and *bitachon*. True belief in something is not flimsy and ethereal. It is solid and concrete. It is real and ready to be put into action. It is not simply thinking the right thought or talking the right talk. It is walking the walk and living that way through and through.

This man wrote the check and signed it. He lived what he thought and felt in his heart, and that is the takeaway. When you are rock-solid in your belief and remain unshakeable in the face of uncertainty, then writing a check – even when have no money in your account – comes as smoothly and naturally to you as writing your name. It’s no gimmick. It’s real, through and through.

That’s what it means to live with G-d. And if we want, we can all live with G-d in such unbelievably real ways. It’s all up to us.

Reprinted from the Parashat Behar 5782 edition of the TorahAnytime.com Newsletter compiled and edited by Elan Perchik.

The Prayers of a Mother at the Grave of Shimon Bar Yochai

This story took place 78 years ago and was recorded in the book Hilulai D'Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, written by a man who was a first-hand witness to this event.



Burial place of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai

The outer yard surrounding the room where the graves of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (also known as the Rashbi) and his son were buried was jammed with Jews from all over Israel. They had come to Meron on Lag B'omer, the 33rd day of the counting of the omer. Lag B'Omer is the anniversary of the passing of the Rashbi, who had enjoined his disciples to celebrate, rather than mourn, on the day of his passing. Today, all of those gathered in Meron would cut the hair of their three-year-old sons for the first time, leaving only the side-locks.

The voices of hundreds of Jews could be heard as they recited Psalms. There were Jews of all types, whose ancestors had come from all over the world. All were praying and begging G-d to help them raise their children in Torah and good deeds in the merit of Rabbi Shimon.

It was already after mid-day on Friday and time to get ready for Shabbat. The visitors from Tiberias, Tzfat, Haifa and the residents from other cities and towns in the Galilee started to leave for their homes in order to arrive before the commencement of the Sabbath.

Many Visitors Chose to Remain for Shabbat

Many of the visitors though, especially the ones from Jerusalem which is quite a distance, chose to remain in Meron for Shabbat.

On Friday night, the beautiful melodies of the various groups praying reached the heights of the nearby mountains. Their hearts were overflowing as thousands of Jews joined together to dance and sing.

Shabbat morning arrived and the men gathered in large groups to descend the valley to the small Megiddo Lake where they immersed themselves to prepare for the morning prayers. When the morning prayers had finished a scream pierced the Sabbath atmosphere. A woman who had brought her son just yesterday for his first haircut was crying hysterically.

Her son had suddenly become sick and had died. Doctors who were sent from the British government to the area immediately put the entire section under quarantine. No one could come and no one could leave.

Suddenly, the mother gathered the boy in her arms and went into the room where the Rashbi was buried. She placed the dead child on the Rashbi's grave and started crying out, "Oh great tzadik (righteous one). I, your servant, came in your honor to cut the hair of my child. I came to make my son, my first and only child, into a good Jew. I kept my promise to come here on Lag B'Omer. Only yesterday I held him here and cut his hair in song and joy. Now, great tzadik, how shall I return home without my child? How can I show my face in my home?"

"Let Everyone Know that There is a G-d Ruling Over this World"

In the midst of her prayers, the mother arose and said, "Tzadik, Rabbi Shimon, I am laying down my child on your grave as he is. I beg of you, with tears, do not shame me. Give me back my child just as I brought him here. Let the holy name of G-d be exalted along with the name of the great tzadik. Let everyone know that there is a G-d ruling over this world."

The woman concluded her prayers and left the room, leaving her son on the grave of the Rashbi. The doors of the room were closed as everyone left the room.

A few moments later a child's scream was heard from behind the closed door. The mother ran into the room and to her great surprise she saw her son standing on his feet and crying for a glass of water. Happiness and commotion filled the room. The local doctors examining the child announced in wonder that this was not a

natural occurrence or a normal incident, but rather a miracle which must have happened in the merit of the great Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

The government agents immediately reopened the gates and the masses once again poured inside. Everyone seeing the revived child pronounced the blessing “Blessed be G-d Who revives the dead.”

Reprinted from the Parshat Emor 5783 edition of L’Chaim, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.

Another Miracle from Prayers at the Tomb of Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai

Throughout the world, patients waiting for liver transplants are prioritized based on the severity of their illness, as measured by what’s called the Model for End-Stage Liver Disease (MELD) score. The score uses blood tests to determine how urgently a patient needs a liver transplant within the next three months. The sicker one is, the higher the score.

Another important determination is if the liver is a match from the donor to the recipient. Better matching of the donor organ to the recipient will improve transplant outcomes and benefit the overall waiting list by minimizing failures and the need for re-transplantation.

Not All Patients Survive

Very often, patients become quite sick by the time they receive a call to have their liver transplant. Not all survive. Some patients grow worse suddenly, and become too sick to receive a transplant.

There was a religious woman from New York, sick with liver disease r”l, who was approved for a liver transplant, however, she waited over five years to get a call from the national registry or any transplant center to schedule her transplant.

Her husband was a Baal Tzedakah who supported institutions as well as individual Jews. One of the Jews he supported was a Yerushalmi Yid who would frequently travel to kivrei Tzaddikim to daven for this woman and for others.

One year, a few days before Lag Baomer, the man called and asked the Yerushalmi if he could make a special trip to Meron in order to daven for his wife

at the kever of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai on Lag BaOmer. He suggested that the yid go to Meron for Shabbos and remain there until after Lag BaOmer.

“Unfortunately, my wife’s health is deteriorating fast, and she needs tefillos. I’ll pay for the taxi and for all the expenses involved.” The Yerushalmi Yid obliged and went to Meron before Shabbos. He spent almost every waking moment at the tomb of the Tzaddik and poured his heart out for her recovery.

A Fatal Car Accident Opens a Possibility for a Life-Saving Transplant

That Shabbos, there was a fatal car accident in New York, leaving the driver dead. His liver was an exact match for this woman. However, there were two other people (not Jewish) ahead of her in line for the liver transplant. Time was of the essence and the transplant center at a nearby medical center tried to call the person next in line. After trying numerous times, they could not get hold of him.

So, the hospital moved on to the next person on the list. They called the second person in line to come down to the hospital for an immediate transplant. This man came directly to the hospital, but as they were prepping him for surgery, he suddenly became traumatized and refused to go through with the operation. No amount of coaxing or convincing could change the man’s mind, and he quickly got dressed and ran out of the hospital.

Now, it was the religious woman’s turn. The problem was, how would the hospital reach her if she wouldn’t pick up the phone on Shabbos? One of the surgeons had the number of a prominent rabbi who he knew would pick up a phone on Shabbos in the case of medical emergencies and pikuach nefesh. From time to time, he had called and gotten through. The doctor called and the rabbi picked up the phone.

If We Can’t Contact the Religious Woman, It (the Liver Transplant) will Be Given to Someone Else

“We have a viable liver for a religious woman. We need to get in contact with her immediately. The liver is just what she needs, but if she will not come now, it will be given away to someone else.”

The rabbi understood the severity of the matter and decided that the first thing he would try is to call the woman’s home directly. The hospital had tried but she did not pick up. (On one occasion when she was a very sick patient in the hospital, the hospital had called her home and they picked up because it was understood that it might be an emergency.) Perhaps they will answer the phone when he, the rabbi called.

He dialed the number the surgeon had given him and a child picked up! The child hadn’t thought about it and just miraculously (by Divine Providence) picked up the phone. Quickly, the rabbi was able to inform the family that she must get to

the hospital immediately as this was pikuach nefesh and she might never get another chance like this.

Indeed, the call and the transplant saved her life. Within weeks, the woman recovered fully from her disease. The woman and her husband thank Hashem every day for this miracle. They believe it all happened because of the tefillos at the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the place which the Shlah HaKadosh testifies: “Miracles occur there.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Emor 5783 edition of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman's Torah Tavlin.

The Vizhnizer Rebbe's Surprising Questions

When the Vizhnitzer Rebbe, R' Moshe Yehoshua Hager zt"l, attended the wedding of his chasid Chatzkel's daughter, he stayed a bit longer than usual and when he got up to leave the wedding hall, he requested of Chatzkel to call him when he got home.

“Rebbe,” Chatzkel said, “I don't want to shter the Rebbe. There is a mitzvah tantz tonight and I won't be home until close to 4 am!”

But the Rebbe insisted. So, at 4 o'clock in the morning when Chatzkel got home, he dialed the gabbai's number who immediately went to the Rebbe, as he was instructed. The Rebbe washed his hands and got on the phone.

“The chasuna was really beautiful, no?” he inquired. Chatzkel affirmed, indeed it was everything he had hoped it to be. “How many guests came?” The Rebbe inquired, “Which Rabbanim came later? Did so and so make it? And what about so and so?” Chatzkel answered each question. The conversation continued for another 20 minutes as they discussed the different aspects of the wedding.

When the Rebbe eventually hung up, the gabbai could not contain his curiosity. This was the one of the most unusual things he'd ever seen. The Rebbe explained: “Chatzkel just married off his tenth and last child. Usually, when the family comes home after a wedding, they reminisce and rehash the entire event, discussing the guest, the band, the food and how it all played out. However, as you know, Chatzkel is a recent widower. I thought about how much pain he would have when he came home to an empty house. He needed someone to discuss the wedding with!”

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